How to / Trackmania / Trackmaking / Good style

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Introduction

You as a trackmaker

As you might know, there are several hundreds of thousands of driving tracks out there for all the Trackmania games together. To be successful in making tracks, you might want to listen to what some reputable trackmakers have to say about this...

Ganjarider

Best known for Fast walls
Famous tracks Dutch delight , Black Velvet , Sticky Tarmac

Question: GR, how would you define your own trackmaking style and how did you develop it?
Full speed with plenty margin and solely build for multiplayer.
My first online experience with TM was back in TMO demo (2004). I noticed the custom tracks hosted online were tricky and I couldn't finish most of them within 5 minutes. When I started building tracks myself (in Sunrise 2005) I kept this experience in mind. I started hosting my own tracks and people liked the way I made a track easy to finish and still challenging to get a good time on. From then on I knew I should always keep this style of building.

Question: What is a "good" track in your eyes?
Hard to put into words. A track is good when I want to race it again and again. It just feels good or it doesn't. But of course *margin* is the magic word. In my eyes a track should give the driver enough time to see where to go next. Of course two or three 'hard' parts is ok but when I need to learn the complete track to get to the finish it's no fun. When I play online I want to be able to finish a new track at least 3 times in 5 minutes.

Question: What would you tell a new author "to do" and "not to do" when developing his tracks?
Back in Sunrise when I built my first tracks I just started building somewhere in the middle of the field and then added the rest later. So I builded backwards from the middle to the start. Sure it came out nice but it just didn't flow well. So I started building from start to finish and I found the flow.
For instance, if you're building full speed, the track needs to 'feel' where the car wants to go. The car gets faster and faster during a race. For full speed tracks this means you must build longer and wider once the track progresses and this is only possible when building from start to finsh.
For tech tracks this is not so important. Because of all the bends you need to slow down so the car doesn't really go faster. But even for tech, building from start to finish is a good way to see what you can build next.

The finish is very important. The driver has to squeeze his buttocks tight when going through the finish. Never end with a dull straight road. Just think of something like a looping, corkscrew, jump, etc.

Try not to use reversed boosters. They are annoying to most people and it really shows you're a good builder when you can make constructions that don't need them. But there are times a cool construction only works with a reversed booster and then it's ok.
Try to get as much feedback as possible from other players. Either host your own tracks online or ask friends.

Get rid of bottlenecks. A bottleneck is a part of the track that is tricky for most people the first few runs (unless you made it tricky on purpose ofcourse but mostly it's a part that doesn't flow well). Because you have driven your own track many times you probably don't see the bottlenecks anymore. The best way to test this is by hosting your track online and spectate drivers that are new to the track... Or just ask someone to test it.

Because there are already so many tracks out there being original is pretty hard but still try to put in your own style and always try to keep varied.

Irondragons

Best known for Allround tracks
Famous tracks Ahead is a blur , Open your eyes

Question: Michael, how would you define your own trackmaking style and how did you develop it ?
Its something that's not to be reckoned with. My critera, which might as well be the same as my style is to 'bring something new to the table everytime' (which is generally the reason I haven't released a map in a while, not because I've peaked).

If I have a great idea that requires a few awkward bends to execute or a generic/boring section then I'll scrap the idea. Its always been easy to build a 'Panis' like track for me, but from my perspective they are just a load of repeats, they are just a load of techniques repeated over and over quite like an construction enginner's textbook.

I guess the track editor is like a big jigsaw (puzzle) and the picture on the box was a road looping blandly with a start and finish in between, I'll take the jigsaw peices and I'll place them in random positions while staying true to the original (picture). Basically.

Question: What is a "good" track in your eyes ?
Anything I haven't been forced into or forced to drive through.

Its based around how long you'ved been playing the game also, so 'anything' would be definable good on my first playing.

Question: What would you tell a new author "to do" and "not to do" when developing his tracks?
Nothing, learning is a natural process. I might give them some advice if they asked me, but has anyone prompted a specific question? No.

Also, I typed up a tutorial a while back, if you don't feel my message is substancial enough - paste it here.

Tamonte

Best known for Story tracks + Extraordinaire
Famous tracks Elvenpath , Venice challenge

Question: Ruben, how would you define your own trackmaking style and how did you develop it?
Almost as soon I started playing the game I began making tracks for TMN. Since that moment until now, my goal when making a track is to add something new to it, something I'd never seen before.

My first tracks were pretty simple, where I explored the possibilities of the game blocks, putting them to new uses, in search of new race concepts.

Then I discovered the MT, realised its possibilities, and started playing with it.

This tool helped me develop my ideas for new kinds of tracks, until I made my first "Story Track", without even knowing there was a term for such tracks. That's when I took knowledge of TMX.

Since that time I've been working on this kind of tracks with heavy use of custom files. When developing a track, I try to give it a certain atmosphere which is achieved by bounding the music, the track itself, the mod, scenery, sounds and images together. I must say that I get my inspiration by everything around me, from music, to cinema, computer games, architecture, etc.

Question: What is a "good" track in your eyes?
I'd say that a good track makes me smile, or either stare, play it again and again, laugh, wonder how it was made... There are so many ways a track can be good! It can be an intense full speed track with constant adrenaline, or a well built tech track that has a great flow and nice moves, a story track that shows different and amusing features, or any other kind.

Question: What would you tell a new author "to do" and "not to do" when developing his tracks?
Firstly it's good to follow the rules and be honest to others as well as to yourself. You may also want to get every information concerning to track making in all the forums around. Search a lot and exchange ideas with another track makers out there.

Then it's just about finding your own style and do what you like.

Above all I think when someone works hard and gladly on his/her tracks the outcome will be good for sure.

Swensen (3Don)

Best known for Short Technical
Famous tracks His Mini Series

Question: Snorre, how would you define your own trackmaking style and how did you develop it ?
I favor technical tracks. I've always tried to be creative and find every block's potential use separately and in combination with other blocks. I spent most of my early TMN-participation just playing with the editor. unfortunately i had to experience all the beginner errors available, but I've been patient and learned from my mistakes, still im surprised that people find extraordinary shortcuts (fortunately, not as often as before)

Question: What is a "good" track in your eyes ?
Fun is the key. Then, how do you define fun? you can't, while some people like a simple challenge for online, others like millimeter-precision tracks, full speed, impossible WR-hunt tracks and so on. There is as many definitions of fun as there are players. However, in my eyes a good track is a track that lets you work with all functions of the car including the brakes.
That would be a tech-track with some nice slides and jumps and not too long (surprise). Something I react to is when I play a track that is close-to-impossible, when I play those tracks I give up and leave whatever server I played it on.
I'm not a good driver, and in many ways that is a benefit, because the tracks I make won't be impossible for others.

Question: What would you tell a new author "to do" and "not to do" when developing his tracks?
There are some standards I follow when building a track.
- Too long PF-starts gives me the hiccups, I want instant action.
- Second, check for shortcuts. You have to remember that people are very creative when it comes to finding the shortest way to the finish.
- Third, be careful with backboosters, people can avoid them.
- Fourth, if the intention is to make a decent track, forget random parts, it's really annoying! Fifth, use signs in a good way, place them with care, if you can, let someone else try your track before you make your track available to others.
- Last, don't ruin a good track with a lot of MT flashing where your eyes usually goes when driving.

That was the "don't do" things, now go figure out what to do !

Smok3y

Best known for Fast allround tracks
Famous tracks F1 GranD Pr!x , MoOnL!gHt

Question: Amit, how would you define your own trackmaking style and how did you develop it ?
My style is a simple one which can be summed into the following few points:

a) Make tracks that are easy, fun and still challenging and good for online races.

b) I like stunts - mainly precision jumps. So after a few hit and miss tries when I started building maps, I kinda came up with this style. i played a lot of maps with varied styles from some big mappers like Ganjarider, Panis, Pitstep, Andree, etc and they all had their own original styles.
And I always loved the jumps in their maps. And I like speed a lot. So i first tried to incorporate this style in My TMn map Nations Rally to see the public opinion. I was surprised that people really liked the speed+jump combos. Hence I developed on that popularity and started making maps like such. The main factor was still the easiness of the map so everyone can play and yet there should be an element of challenge to make the hardened pros also play it. That is how I got here.

Question: What is a "good" track in your eyes ?
Any track that has a logical route and reasoning behind it. A track has to have flow and I mean that one section transitions into another one smoothly. It should show that the author has put in detail and time into it. Not just some track pieces jumbled up together and thrown in for the heck of it. A few important features I look for are:

a) Speed (Not too fast not too slow).

b) Fun and nice for online play as this is an online game.

c) Nice decoration to give the feel of things whizzing by you.

d) Tech or speed - It should be smooth in every transition.

e) Good MT work - That shows you care for your map and spent time grooming it.

f) Nice Author description and screenshot to tell the other what to look for when you play the map.

g) I especially liked well calculated / times smooth jumps with nice soft landings.

Question: What would you tell a new author "to do" and "not to do" when developing his tracks?
Everyone has his/her own racing/mapping style so I wont ask anyone to change their style. But yes if you can learn something to make it better please do.

a) Try not to use reverse boosters. We have a Brake key on our KBs/PADs, and we can use them. Don't make a track too fast so you have to use a reverse booster. Use less forward boosters and you won't need reverse boosters. Use logic.

b) Make a fun map to let everyone enjoy it. Don't make maps that look like you are taking out your anger on the kids and that play like they want to blast your car away into the universe. It's an online game and everything should be having fun not cursing you torturing them with an insane map.

c) Always cater to the fastest and reasonably slowest drivers. When making a map think "How fast and how far can a pro racer jump" and/or "how slow and how little can a newbie jump" when you think like that you will have a track that plays well for everyone, not just for you !

d) Always play maps from well know mappers and see what you can learn from them and develop your own unique style.

e) And if you want to learn crazy MT work then get in touch with TStarGermany , he is one of the best I know ;)

Till next time folks. Have fun and God Bless. Love you all :)

LoCoBuDDha

Best known for Tournament technical
Famous tracks Party Tech, Enlightment , Irish Tech

Question: Filip, how would you define your own trackmaking-style and how did you develop it ?
Tech/Drift tracks with new tought-of ideas.

I get inspiration from other tracks, but i never copy them.I really find alot of the new tech-tracks round the web boring, and unispiring - because you've seen the same bends over and over again.

This is why I'm saying I appreciate making something new. Something that will inspire others as well. It can, however, result in some confusion whenever a player tries one of my tracks for the first time - because the track-concept is new.

How exactly I devolop my style? Well back in the days, fullspeed was totally dominant compared to tech, so I started out making fullspeed/highspeed tracks
and got quite known on that behalf. After some time of gaining peoples trust and confidence in me, I started on my Irish Tech-series, which it should turn out, people really went crazy about.Since then I have only been creating tech/drift tracks, and I have soley kept my focus at what I'm best at: Creating tech tracks.

Later on, being full of creating tracks, I wanted to devote my creations to larger international tournaments, and maybe be able to get the honor of watching some of the worlds best players competing on my tracks. It's always great experience to watch the worlds best racing my tracks.

Question: What is a "good" track in your eyes ?
A good track is in my eyes something with a great flow. It has to be able to stand out in some way, and be creative in a new way each time. There's alot of great tracks out there, normally geting looked over on this behalf, witch really is undefineable. On the contrary of what other people might say, I will go as far as saying, that there is something beautiful and good in each and every track out there. As long as it's creator has put some thought behind the composision of it, and has had the patience to forfill that thought, there will always be something out there to soothe what ever mood you'r in.

Question: What would you tell a new author "to do" and "not to do" when developing his tracks?
I'd defidently say that what ever you do, you shouldn't just go right ahead and make 20 new tracks, hoping to get good at it that way.

Of course you would get some practice and experience with making tracks, but if you are not fully engaged in what you are doing, you will never be able to create a great track.If you want to make a great track, then it really requires you to take the time, energy and patience to do so.

From my point of view, patience is the keyword, and of course a creative spirit.You can't really tell an artist HOW to create something, but you can tell the artist what tools he (or she) has for their disposal, and how thoose tools can be used, in order to get to a final artwork. What you can't do, is to tell an artist WHAT to do.

So I can't really give out any tips and pointers, other than to tell you what I do myself, when I'm working on a new track.First of all, I create the the basic path (or road) for the track. Then I play and edit it, a heck of alot of times, untill I'm satisfied with the result, untill I make the final touch-ups and decorate it.

I guess doing it this way requires alot of patience, and also confidence in what you are doing.I also fell that it is really important before you create a track, that you know what stile you are going for. Is there gonna offroad? Should it be tight? Should it be funny? Will there be re-uses included ect. etc.You have to be open to inspiration, and go with what ever you have in mind.

Just be sure you have the devotion to let that inspiration guide you trough it. I wish you all the best of luck & fortune.

DerFeineHerr (DFH)

Best known for Crazy technical tracks
Famous tracks Crossing my garden, Pandemonium

Question: DFH, how would you define your own trackmaking-style and how did you develop it?
When I create a track I want every single part of it to be superb.
It should be awesome for racing, but even a great optical experience.
My style is a mixture of tech, Offroad, action, innovation and design.
Its important for me, that when I tesdrived the track, I have no boring elements left in it like to long straight
or to wide curves. It all have to be challenging from start to end. All is very tight calculated
and mostly very dense, with reuse and much surface changes, drops and jumps.
I edit my tracks so long until I really have a result that feels complet,
without any emergency solution or compromises.
I even often delete a track if I m not comfortable with some part of the track.

Question: What is a "good" track in your eyes ?
1. It have to be innovative, no rigid schemes involved.
2. Any Part should be really made with passion. No Emergency Solutions.
Often Trackbuilders lose theire passion in the middle of the Track and then just finish it with a bad and boring style.
3. It should be well calculate and smooth to drive.
4. It should be challenging and have a good design.
6. And i really like it when it get dense and tight, with some reuse or aircrossing :=)
7. I somehow dont like very easy tracks, I guess I need the Adrenalin
8. should be copletly respawnable for TMNF, at least if its a techtrack ;=)

Question: What would you tell a new author "to do" and "not to do" when developing his tracks?
+ Testdriving, Testdriving
+ Delete every part no matter how long and build it new, when its not really good
+ Build more then a day on a track, the best ideas come often over night.
+ get the maximum out of any idea. Testdriving. Building, Testdriving. Building.
+ Build a tight Atmosphere around the Racingline.

- To Long Straights
- to wide curves
- Airbreak (bad calculated jumps)
- Emergency Solutions
- Long PF's

Listen to what these people say, if they don't have the right piece of advice for you in terms of good track making, noone has.

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